

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3307

S E C R E T ANKARA 2127

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TU

SUBJECT: POPPY BAN

REF: ISTANBUL 736

1. I TELEPHONED MFA SEC GEN EREZ THIS MORNING TO ADVISE HIM OF FALSITY OF HURRIYET STORY REGARDING REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO SECRETARY BUTZ. I ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER NEWSPAPER COVERAGE HERE OF ALLEDED DECISIONS REACHED BY INTER-MINISTERIAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL RE SPECIFIC POPPY GROWING PLAN (REFTEL) AND BY A FURTHER REPORT CARRIED IN PRESS TODAY THAT THIS DECISION WAS ABOUT TO BE BROUGHT FOR APPROVAL BEFORE FULL COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

2. I REFERRED TO FOREIGN MINISTER GUNES' COMMENTS TO ME IN OUR LAST MEETING TO EFFECT THAT GOT PREPARED TO DELAY DECISION FOR AWHILE IN ORDER TO ALLOW TIME FOR COOLING DOWN OF LOCAL PASSIONS AND NEWSPAPER ATTENTION. I SAID THAT IN VIEW OF THIS I OF COURSE SKEPTICAL OF THESE NEWS ACCOUNTS BUT IF THERE WAS ANYTHING AT ALL TO THEM I WOULD WISH TO SEE FOREIGN MINISTER AT ONCE.

3. TWO HOURS LATER EREZ TELEPHONED ME BACK TO SAY THAT HE HAD TAKEN MY CALL UP WITH FOREIGN MINISTER WHO HAD IN TURN SPOKEN DIRECTLY WITH PRIME MINISTER AND THAT ON THE BASIS OF FOREIGN MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER, EREZ WAS AUTHORIZED TO TELL ME THAT (1) NO DECISON WAS TAKEN ON
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THIS MATTER AT THE LAST INTER-MINISTERIAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

MEETING, (2) NO DECISION IS GOING TO BE MADE ON IT IN THE NEAR FUTURE AT ANY COUNCIL OF MINISTER'S MEETING, (3) THEREFORE THE EXECUTIVE DECREE PROHIBITING POPPY GROWING IS STILL IN FORCE, AND (4) THE POPPY GROWING DECISION WILL BE REVIEWED BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AT "A REASONABLE TIME" BEFORE THE OCTOBER PLANTING SEASON.

4. COMMENT: A "REASONABLE TIME" BEFORE POPPY PLANTING PROBABLY MEANS NOT LATER THAN JUNE WHEN GOVERNMENT DECREES RELATING TO SUCH MATTERS ARE USUALLY ISSUED. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE CITED PARA 1 ABOVE RESULTS FROM ACTIVE BACKGROUNDING OF PRESS BY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE WHO HAS HANDLED PROBLEM FROM START WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO USG-GOT RELATIONS. ON OTHER HAND, LATTER ARE CONCERNS OF PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER AND SCENARIO WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST TWO DAYS IS FAIRLY TYPICAL RESULT, I.E. MORE PUBLIC POSTURING THAT THE BAN IS ABOUT TO GO AND MORE PRIVATE ASSURANCES THAT ACTUAL DECISION NOT TAKEN AND NOT TO BE TAKEN IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE.
MACOMBER

NOTE BY OC/T: DISTRIBUTION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O, MR. TOWHIE.

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